

Testimony of Melanie Steinman, Chief Steward of AFSCME 3800
Board of Regents Public Forum on the University Budget
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My name is Melanie Steinman, chief steward of AFSCME local 3800. On May 20th, I saw an outrageous new low on the part of the University: the Office of Information Technology swung an ax that cut off the livelihood of 25 University employees. 25 dedicated, long-term employees, some with over 30 years of service to the U of M were laid off.

14 of them were in the clerical and technical workers' unions.

After these lay-offs happened, the leadership of our Unions were explicitly told by OIT and HR that you all, the Board of Regents, put your stamp of approval on this mass lay-off from OIT. (So be it. We'll certainly challenge the necessity of those lay-offs in the first place.) But did the Board of Regents put your stamp of approval on the appalling manner in which these lay-offs were carried out?

These employees, barely receiving the basic courtesy of time to collect any more than a box-full of personal belongings, were given their lay-off notices and told to leave on the spot. To get the rest of their belongings, they needed to schedule an appointment during non-work hours. These employees were not thanked for their service. Instead, many were escorted out of the building, as plain-clothed police observed! When some of their coworkers that remained attempted to say "good bye" / to get any word, any hint of what was going on, they were hushed. One laid-off worker reported that his supervisor held up a hand to block a coworker from trying to communicate to him.

There is a tiny line in their lay-off notices that reads, "this is not a reflection of the quality of your work". Then, why were these OIT employees shamed and treated like criminals in the course of these lay-offs? **Where is the dignity?**

With these employees gone, the ENTIRE University now has just 1 person remaining to answer directory assistance calls. And setting up conference calls?? (including yours here!)?? No one remains at the U to assist with that service –just to give a couple of examples.

The U claims to offer an "unparalleled employment experience. Only at the University do you get: [...]Dedication to employees' wellness [...] with programs to promote a **healthy** workplace..."

How is this treatment an "unparalleled" employment experience? How do these actions support "wellness" -for either current or laid-off employees?

The Office of Information Technology has of course been on the radar lately. Earlier this spring, OIT was specifically held up as an example of reorganization within the U's "Spans and Layers" Report to the Legislature. Then, on the last day of the legislative session, with the U's funding secure, OIT lets 25 of it workers go, 14 of them AFSCME members. As far as we've heard, nobody's supervisor was laid-off. How has that affected OIT's "**exemplary**" "spans and

layers”? How has the Legislature been lied to? And HOW is shaming and kicking-out its workers the actions of a “premier” employer?

Is this culture of disdain for U of M employees something that the Board of Regents has put your stamp of approval on?